

**Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Corporation held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014, 6.00pm, The Conference Room, Prior Pursglove College**

**Present:** Dr P Gavens (Chair), Mr M Bell, Mrs J Burton, Mrs C Craster, Mr D Dodds, Mr C Groves, Mr J Kay, Mr M Loftus, Mr K Mitchell, Dr M Simpson, Cllr P Spencer

**In Attendance:** Mrs E Grove (Clerk), Mr R Grierson (Vice Principal), Mr J Zoryk (Assistant Principal, Resources), Mrs P Miller (Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Guidance), Ms A Shaffi (Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Skills)

*Meeting quorate*

*61% attendance rate*

- 1) **Brief follow up to confidential session from last meeting:** A discussion took place relating to the process for reviewing senior post-holder salaries which will be followed up by the Personnel and Remuneration Committee.  
**Assistant Principals' (APs) attendance at Corporation meetings:** A proposal was made that all APs should be invited to attend future meetings. A discussion followed and this was agreed on the basis that their role was to answer questions and not to take part in general debate.

Mrs Burton, Mr Bell, Mr Mitchell, Mr Grierson, Mrs Miller, Ms Shaffi and Mr Zoryk joined the meeting at 6.10pm.

Dr Gavens thanked everyone for coming in at such short notice.

2) **Apologies for Absence**

Ms Bramley, Mrs Crombie, Mr Downs, Dr Lofthouse, Mr Parkins, Mrs White

3) **Ofsted**

3.1) **Update from The Principal on the Ofsted outcome:** Mrs Burton reported that she had received a telephone call from, Ofsted, advising that the draft report would be sent on 31<sup>st</sup> January for an accuracy check with a return date of 4<sup>th</sup> February. We have been told that the final report will be published on 12<sup>th</sup> February. No formal explanation had been provided for the downgrading of subject areas.

Mrs Burton confirmed that a complaint had been submitted on the basis that Ofsted had taken too narrow a focus and had ignored wider data. Research in respect of other sixth form colleges with a similar range of data had shown more positive grades.

Contradictory information had been received from Ofsted. Confirmation had been given that the complaint would be taken into consideration and the college would be able to participate in the process. A few days later the college had been advised it would not be able to participate in the process. Ofsted would not say whether they had taken the complaint into account. Mrs Burton had been advised that a further complaint could be submitted (stage 3) or the original complaint could be re-submitted. Governors asked whether a formal response would be received and Mrs Burton advised that this was questionable. Mrs Burton went on to outline the involvement of the Association of Colleges in dealings with Ofsted and they considered that there were good grounds for complaint. A wide ranging discussion followed as to the benefits, or otherwise, of submitting a further complaint. Mrs Burton was not aware of many colleges where a complaint had resulted in an upward change in grades. Mrs Burton was asked what her recommendation would be on submitting another complaint. Her initial thoughts had been to submit a further complaint but it was more important to concentrate on ensuring that this summer's results improved on last year's.

Further discussion took place and it was decided to await a response from the first complaint and if none was received then to prompt Ofsted. If nothing was forthcoming then it was agreed the matter should be left.

Dr Gavens advised that the Education Funding Agency (EFA) would be visiting the college to ascertain whether, in their opinion, governors and managers had the capability to drive improvements. They would make a recommendation to the Minister after their visit.

Mr Grierson left the meeting at 6.37pm.

3.2) Communications Plan: The draft plan, letters and emails were discussed. It was agreed that reference to submitting a complaint to Ofsted should be removed.

Governors questioned Mrs Burton about the source of some of the statements and stressed the importance of putting in reference to the source documentation. It was further agreed that the DfE table should be removed from the media release with the source of the data referred to and reference to comparison to colleges instead. After further discussion it was agreed that reference should be made to last year's A\* and A grade successes and excellent BTEC results.

Discussion moved on to the Chair's quote and it was agreed that a phrase should be included about having confidence in being able to turn the results round in summer.

Mrs Burton was questioned about communications with stakeholders other than students, potential students and parents. She confirmed that she will be talking with others including MPs and Head Teachers.

It was suggested that staff be asked to provide good news stories to use in follow up to the publication of the report. Mr Bell provided information about Music Technology students taking a university level course. Mrs Burton confirmed that this would be done. Governors approved the approach of the communication plan with the revisions noted above.

Discussion moved on to the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) and what was being done now to support students. The immediate focus was failing students and those below target grades. Adverts had been placed for teachers in some subjects as well as for learning support assistants. The college was also working with other sixth form colleges to establish and support standards of marking. This was a general NORVIC collaboration and not specific to the Ofsted outcome. Mrs Burton reported that the student governors had noticed a perceptible difference amongst students in respect of study and revision.

It was agreed that the Standards and Strategy Committee meeting scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> February should become a full Corporation meeting focusing on the PIAP. **Action**

Dr Simpson left the meeting at 7.00pm part way through the following agenda item.

#### 4) **Governor Activities**

4.1) Feedback and questions following Governors visits to Faculties: Dr Gavens advised that a number of questions had arisen and these had been forwarded to Mrs Burton for a response. He further advised that a Q&A session would be held at each meeting as part of The Principal's report. **Action.**

Q1: Staff have reported that they were told that Ofsted had graded leadership and management (L&M) as 2 but the grade had to be 4 as outcomes were graded 4. This was not correct and gave the impression leadership accepted no responsibility for the Ofsted grading.

A: Ofsted had not said that L&M was 2. The college self-assessment report had graded all areas 2 except for learner outcomes which was 3. Mrs Burton confirmed that she had said to staff at the post inspection feedback session that L&M had to be 4 as learner outcomes had been graded 4. Research after the event by her and members of staff had found this not to be the case and she had corrected this misunderstanding to staff.

It had arisen following several comments by inspectors which may have been misinterpreted.

Mrs Burton informed governors that she had said to staff that she took responsibility for the outcome of the inspection and governors held her to account. She had thought long and hard about what she could have done earlier for example making the change to entry criteria a year earlier.

Q2: A concern was raised that Staff week meetings last summer conflicted with revision sessions staff wanted to organise.

A: The week after the summer half term has habitually been designated 'staff week' due to the number of exams taking place. It has been used for training as well as giving time for course reviews, reflection on subject progress for the self-assessment report. Last year the week had been divided up to ensure all staff training activities could happen as well as subject meetings and times for revision. It was not possible to please everyone and conflict could arise. Staff have already been advised that there will not be a staff week this year. There will be one PD Day. Discussion is taking place with Faculty Managers about revision sessions. Staff will be available to students. Mr Bell advised that they are always contactable by email as well.

Q3: Student recruitment

(a) Have we been encouraging student recruitment without sufficient regard to students' ability to take the course?

(b) Over the last 3 years have we failed to enrol students onto courses which were appropriate to their skills and abilities?

(c) Were we late to introduce alternative courses?

A: This is tied into our ethos. We have always been an inclusive college and in recent years we have taken students in who were unable to go to other colleges. This has been done with governor support. There is evidence that they may fail first time round but we have supported them to achieve over three years. At previous inspections this has been seen as a strength but this is no longer the case. We do not want these individuals to become NEETs. However, this approach is now working against us and that is why the policy has changed.

Alternative courses have been successively introduced over the last 3 or more years and one or two more may be considered.

Q4: A concern was expressed that teachers were not consulted about the changes this year to criteria for accepting students on certain courses.

A: The changes made in the science subjects were discussed with staff over an extended period last year. After the 2013 results swift decisions needed to be made and the areas where not all subject staff were consulted were Psychology, Law and Accounting. Staff in those areas are talking positively about the impact of the changes. Had there been more time we would have talked with staff more widely. Many staff have been saying for some time that we should be reviewing entry criteria. In the case of Accounting and Law, the Faculty Managers are involved in the courses and they were consulted.

Over the last three years in some cases our entry criteria have not been followed as prospective students have been given the benefit of the doubt. Standards have been raised and we have not been quick enough to recognise the need to introduce additional entry criteria with enough urgency.

Mrs Burton was reminded that governors had requested historic data on grade profiles on entry and this still needed to be provided. Mr Dodds was asked to look at the data and report to the next Standards and Strategy Committee meeting. **Action**

Mrs Burton assured governors that staff will be included in the review process for next year but it was anticipated that 'tweaks' would be needed to entry criteria rather than significant change. This will go into the PIAP. Governors asked for it to be an agenda item at the relevant time and for a briefing session to be given. **Action**

Q5: Has the new management structure resulted in a dominance of pastoral issues and a downplaying of subject responsibilities? A concern was expressed that subject leadership and issues have been harder to address and have not been effectively managed.

A: Mrs Burton gave an outline of the previous structure where there had been seven curriculum departments and a pastoral section. This had resulted in a divide between the two. The new structure brought the two together with students at the centre. Issues, including performance, were being dealt with faster. Each manager now looks after a small number of teachers and there is a focus on student issues. Subject meetings take place regularly. The new structure has resulted in better subject retention, students are tracked more effectively and attendance has improved. There is a clearer link between progress within subjects and pastoral support. Mrs Burton was asked if enough was being done to look at value added within subjects. She considered that it was and invited governors to look at the Faculty Quality Improvement Plans. There is more consistency across faculties and sharing of good practice is taking place.

A discussion followed. Governors could see that small group line management was good but it was more difficult to understand how it worked for subjects. Faculty Managers (FM) and Deputy Faculty Managers (DFM) were managing outside their subject areas. It was explained that all subjects had subject leaders and that meetings took place although the practice varied according to size, for example, some subjects only had one teacher. The aim was to share responsibility. If subject meetings were not taking place then the FM or DFM would step in.

Governors understood that it was senior management's responsibility to set the structure and it was the governors' role to check that it was working. Link governors were asked to delve into this when meeting with staff and report back at meetings. **Action**

Mrs Burton offered to sit down with governors and talk the structure through in more detail. They were also invited to attend subject meetings. **Action.**

Progress with establishing links to the Quality and CIS functions was queried. Three governors had expressed an interest. Mrs Grove was to meet with Mr Grierson and explore a way forward. **Action**

4.2) Feedback from the NORVIC 'Transforming Governance' event: Mr Kay and Mr Loftus reported back on the seminar which was a case study of John Leggott College's change in governance structure following a poor inspection. A discussion followed. Governors recognised that their effectiveness needed to improve and that a review of the current structure was needed. A working group, comprising Mr Kay, Mr Loftus, Mr Dodds, Mr Groves and Mrs Grove, was established to do this and report back at the next meeting. **Action**

4.3) Calendar of activities: Dr Gavens explained that the purpose of the calendar was to capture all governor involvement and help identify any gaps. He asked governors to let the Mrs Grove know if anything was missing. He also asked them to inform Mrs Grove following visits to college and where appropriate to give a brief outline of the purpose of the visit. **Action**

5) **Corporation Meetings**

The dates of the meetings were confirmed as:

5.1) Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014: 6.00pm – Post Inspection Action Plan

5.2) Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014: 5.00pm Preparation for Strategic Planning Conference;  
6.00pm formal meeting.

5.3) Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2014: 1.00 – 7.00pm Strategic Planning Conference.

6) **Any Other Business**

A question was raised about the focus of the conference and whether this should be changed. Mrs Burton advised that she will be talking with Mr Kewin, the external speaker, about how we might the focus of the whole session following the inspection outcome.

A discussion followed and it was concluded that a focussed strategy session was probably needed as well, with Governors, Senior Leadership Team and external input.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.